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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

The Scandinavian Element in the United States (University of Illinois, *Studies in the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 3). By KENDRIC CHARLES BABCOCK, dean of the college of liberal arts and sciences, University of Illinois; sometime fellow, University of Minnesota and Harvard University. (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1914. 223 p.)¹

Mr. Babcock has long been a student of the Scandinavian element in this country. Since 1892 he has been a contributor to periodicals of articles dealing with phases of the subject, and from these earlier studies has grown the present elaborate monograph on the Scandinavian element. In its preparation the author has utilized extensive materials and authorities. Besides printed sources of all sorts, in English, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, he has secured "much matter relating to the subject gathered by means of personal interviews, correspondence, and observations extending over a series of years."

He is deeply interested in the problem of the alien, and believes in the careful investigation of the characteristics of each "cohort in the national forces," an intensive study of each immigrant group. Thus can their contributions to American life and character be appraised. For the Germans the monumental study by A. B. Faust constitutes such a work. Recently similar works have appeared for the Scotch-Irish, for the Jewish immigration from 1881 to 1910, and for emigration from the United Kingdom. Mr. Babcock has undertaken the study of one great group, the Scandinavians, who in at least six states of the Northwest have been "among the chief contributors to State-building." He points out significantly that among the twenty-four million immigrants who came to the United States during the eighty years ending in June, 1906, the Scandinavians numbered more than one million and seven hundred thousand.

The author begins with an analysis of the Scandinavian char-

¹ Reprinted by permission from the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 2: 440-43 (December, 1915).

acter. Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes have many characteristics in common, such as patience, persistence, thrift, love of adventure, courage in facing the possibilities of the future, hatred of slavery, clear, high ideas of personal and political freedom. No less striking is their adaptability to changes of clime, conditions, and circumstances. Yet there are striking temperamental differences between the three. Mr. Babcock's contrast of the Swedes and Norwegians is discriminative and significant. The Swede is aristocratic, polite, vivacious, fond of dignities, assertive, often brilliant, yet a persistent worker, and capable of energy and endurance. The most striking quality of the Norwegian is his democracy. He is "simple, serious, intense, severe even to bluntness, often radical and visionary, and with a tendency to disputatiousness." He has fire and imagination, and is a strenuous, almost turbulent, worker, but, in Mr. Babcock's opinion, he has rarely developed the qualities of great leadership.

Immigrants to the United States are to be judged by "the character and preparation which best fit men to contribute to the permanent progress of a self-governing people." What is the status of the Scandinavians upon this basis? Mr. Babcock believes they are to be rated high—their character, their literacy, their history confirming him in this belief. One feels that he might well have dealt more fully with the latter phase, the history of the Scandinavians in Europe as a background. The Norwegian constitution of 1814, for example, and the political and literary movements in that country during the nineteenth century undoubtedly exerted vast, though intangible, influence upon the thought of the Norwegian element in America.

In a series of four chapters Mr. Babcock considers the causes for the great movement of Scandinavians in response to the call of the American West, and tells briefly and concisely the fascinating story of the westward wave of Scandinavian immigration. The chapters on Norwegian immigration deal with a subject that has been covered in a thorough and scholarly manner by George T. Flom in his monograph *A History of Norwegian Immigration . . . to the Year 1848*. Mr. Babcock adds a compact chapter dealing with the expansion and distribution of the Scandinavian immigrants during the years 1850–1900, tracing the stream of immigration as it flows out "over the wilderness of the upper

Mississippi Valley and west of the Great Lakes." He points out that seventy per cent of the total Scandinavian immigration came into the Northwest.

The greater and more significant portion of the monograph is in the nature of an interpretation of the contribution of the Scandinavians to America from economic, religious, intellectual, social, and political standpoints. The section on "Economic Forces at Work" is impressive in the mass of facts and statistics which it presents. Of particular importance is the history of the relation of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants to the land policy and the development of railway transportation in the West. The value of a particular group of immigrants in the building and development of a region is difficult to estimate because so many angles must be considered. Even economically a purely statistical study must be at best incomplete, for, as Mr. Babcock himself points out, industry, frugality, and intelligence are prime factors. Yet his estimate on the basis of money value is of considerable interest. He values an immigrant over fourteen and under forty-five at one thousand dollars. Then, estimating that eighty per cent of the foreign-born enumerated in the census of 1900 reached this country between those ages, the total capital represented by the Scandinavians on that basis was eight hundred and fifty million dollars. Immigration in the next five years added two hundred and thirty million dollars to this. The total represented "just so much given by the gods of plenty to accelerate the development of the West" (p. 93).

Mr. Babcock's figures frequently do not come down to date. The money estimates referred to above reach the year 1905. On page 102 he speaks of the department store of "S. E. Olson & Co." in Minneapolis, as "one of the largest department stores west of Chicago, and probably the greatest Scandinavian business house in the country . . . which does a yearly business of about \$2,000,000, and in the height of the season employs more than 700 persons." However S. E. Olson and Company went out of business fourteen years ago. On page 122 in his paragraph on church services in the Lutheran church, figures for 1905 are used. Those for 1913 were available, and show a great advance in the transition from Norwegian to English. One page 121, also, the statistics of the United church are for 1905. Other similar

indications show that considerable portions of the book were written at least eight or nine years ago, and not thoroughly revised before publication.

In discussing the Scandinavian element from the religious and intellectual standpoint, Mr. Babcock points out their almost perfect literacy; their record in acquiring the use of English; their establishment of church schools and denominational colleges, as well as their loyalty to the American public school. In his account of churches and religion among the Scandinavians, he confines himself largely to statistics. The literature of the Scandinavian Lutheran church, the annual reports of the church synods, and other valuable sources on the religious life of the Scandinavians seem not to have been utilized. This is unfortunate when one considers how vital the church has been for a large proportion of the immigrants from the northern peninsula. It is likewise to be regretted that, while a good estimate of the Scandinavian press is given, no mention is made of the literary activity of the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes in this country, which has been neither inconsiderable in quantity nor insignificant in quality. One fails to find in Mr. Babcock's book the names of the influential literary leaders among the Scandinavian-Americans. Such a discriminative anthology as *Norsk-amerikanske digte*, for example, is not mentioned. One could wish that less attention had been given to the political, and more to the literary, musical, and artistic labors of the Scandinavians.

After a brief statistical examination of their social relations and characteristics, Mr. Babcock makes a careful study of the Scandinavian influence in local and state politics, and of party preferences and political leadership. In the states of the Northwest the Norse have been extremely active in all branches of local politics, no less than in the legislative, administrative, and executive departments of state government. Not a few have risen to high political distinction in both nation and state. With the spread of the spirit of independent voting, the old staunch republicanism of the Scandinavians seems to be undergoing a change. Mr. Babcock criticizes severely, and with good cause, the tendency toward voting and political recognition on a racial basis.

By thus surveying one important element in its development, Mr. Babcock has made a valuable contribution to American history and particularly to the history of the West. His conclusions, after so long and thorough a study, are significant. "In temperament, early training, and ideals," he declares, "the Scandinavians more nearly approach the American type than any other class of immigrants, except those from Great Britain. . . . The Scandinavians, knowing the price of American citizenship, have paid it ungrudgingly, and are proud of the possession of the high prerogatives and privileges conferred. They fit readily into places among the best and most serviceable of the nation's citizens; without long hammering or costly chiseling they give strength and stability, if not beauty and the delicate refinements of culture, to the social and economic structure of the United States" (page 181).

A critical essay on materials and authorities, an appendix of statistical tables, and the index conclude the volume. In arrangement and classification, as well as inclusiveness, the bibliography is the best in its field. The section on documentary sources is particularly good. On the religious life and activity of the Scandinavians it is not so satisfactory. It is difficult to understand why such mines of information as the annual church reports should be omitted. Also, both for the Norwegians and Swedes, not a few congregational histories have been written, many of them of considerable historical interest, which are not included. Hjalmar R. Holand's *De norske settlementers historie* (Ephraim, Wisconsin, 1908. 603 p.), though to a certain degree uncritical, should not, at any rate, have been omitted from the bibliography.

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The Scandinavian-American. By ALFRED O. FONKALSRUD, PH.D., with the collaboration of BEATRICE STEVENSON, M.A. (Minneapolis, K. C. Holter Publishing Company, 1915. 167 p.)

Lacking the comprehensiveness and careful workmanship of Mr. Babcock's monograph *The Scandinavian Element in the United States*, this thesis by Dr. Fonkalsrud, the result of a doctoral dissertation at New York University, is in some respects